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COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 9, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

As you begin the process of reviewing monumental designations pursuant to President Trump's Executive Order 13792, I urge you to not make any changes to Basin and Range and Gold Butte national monuments.

In Nevada, we are blessed with spectacular public lands and a long history of promoting the conservation of these historically, culturally, and biologically important sites. These lands are part of what makes Nevada such a unique state, and have helped diversify the state's economy by attracting outdoor enthusiasts from across the globe. The designation of Basin and Range and Gold Butte has brought much needed protection and resources to both of these remarkable sites. Any efforts to reverse such designations put these sites at risk of degradation that would have a detrimental effect on the state's economy and shared cultural heritage.

Basin and Range National Monument represents one of the most undeveloped landscapes in the Great Basin region, exemplifying the unique topographies of the State. The Monument is also home to works of art old and new, from ancient petroglyphs in the Mt. Irish and White River Narrows archaeological districts to Michael Heizer's *City*, an art installation as large as the National Mall. The monument preserves traces of life spanning from the Clovis culture 13,000 years ago to our more recent pioneer history. What's more, Basin and Range is an important biological site, home to desert bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain elk, mountain lions, and many others. The original size area of the proposed for protection in legislation was over 800,000 acres. This acreage was based on the Garden and Coal valleys' natural, cultural, and historic values including their connection to the Mojave and Great Basin vegetation communities, and the rarity in their undeveloped nature. Since 2007 efforts have been made to protect this region.

Gold Butte National Monument represents an important place for humans spanning thousands of years. Pre-historic humans sought shelter from the harsh environment in the unique rock formations. The Southern Paiute people have a strong spiritual connection with the site, holding

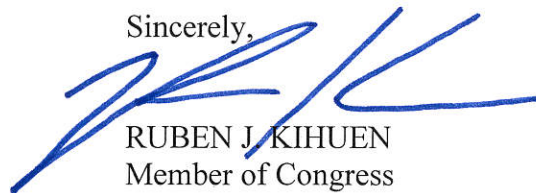
many sacred ceremonies there. The area is also home to important historic sites telling the story of the first ranchers in the area, who exemplified the western expansion of the country. Gold Butte is also home to rare and threatened wildlife such as the Mojave Desert tortoise a number of important paleontological sites, which must be protected and further studied. The original area known as "Gold Butte" included almost 350,000 acres. This acreage was based on boundaries of various Areas of Critical Environmental Concern identified for sensitive species, wildlife habitat including critical desert tortoise habitat, cultural resources, scenic and botanical values.

Any assertions that the federal government designated these monuments without any consultation of local stakeholders in Nevada are completely without merit. The designation of both Basin and Range and Gold Butte national monuments came only after years of efforts by local activists fighting to protect these special places. That included extensive hearings, public outreach, and cooperation on the federal, state, and local levels. There is tremendous support for these monuments across the state, with polls showing that both monuments are supported by a large majority of Nevadans.

You have been quoted as saying that "[t]here is no pre-determined outcome on any monument," however, President Trump's hostility towards conservation leaves me with significant concerns. I urge you to engage with all Nevadans as a part of this process to hear directly their opposition to any changes to these national monuments.

Making changes to Basin and Range and Gold Butte national monuments would be a grievous mistake, which would harm Nevada culturally, ecologically, and economically. I urge you again to not make any changes to these truly special places.

Sincerely,



RUBEN J. KIHUEN
Member of Congress